On the Way to Keronan

By

GRANT ALLEN.

It's easy enough to drive to Keronan now, over the broad high road the French have made across the desert from Susa; but in 1858, when I went there first, it was a very different matter, I can honestly assure you. Tunis was then an independent Beylik, and any bold Christian took his life in his hand if he wished to visit the holy shrine of My Lord the Companion of the Blessed Prophet. For Keronan was still considered, in those days, the most sacred city in all North Africa; nay, next to Mecca itself, so the Imamus declared, the most sacred city in the whole expanse of Islam. No infidel foot had ever yet defiled the streets of Sicli Dkba's final resting place; no Jew, even, was permitted to pass the barriers that surrounded the dark and gloomy metropolis of North African Mohammedanism. To have been detected entering Keronan in disguise would have been certain death for any European; to be suspected of Christianity in that nursery of Islam would have been as much as the bravest and sturdiest Englishman's life was worth in the middle decades of the present century.

Nevertheless, in that very year, 1858, I determined to make my way, alone and in disguise, as a pilgrim to Keronan. I was young in those days, and eager for adventure. It was my ambition in the end to reach, perhaps, even Mecca itself; and I thought the experience I could gain in my pilgrimage to the Holy City of Africa might help me in time to force my way into the Holy City of Arabia as well, unvisited then by a single westerner.

Those were troublous times, however, in 1858, and the world of Islam was profoundly stirred to its inmost core by the events that had so lately taken place in India. With a Mussulman empire still possible at Delhi, as the outcome of the great mutiny not yet suppressed, men knew not what mighty things might not be in store for the faithful of the Prophet. The long-expected ingathering of the infidels might now indeed be close at hand; the triumph of the Moslem over his hereditary foes, delayed so many centuries in the inscrutable and wonderful counsels of Allah, might now at length be on the point of fulfillment. But, meanwhile, since the affairs of the Faith were everywhere so critical, it behooved true Mussulmans all over the world to be duly on their guard against Christian intrigue and Christian interlopers. Islam, always suspicious and always cruel, was just then more suspicious and more warily cruel in temper than ever. Good men and true were murdered, it was rumored, upon their way to Mecca, on the bare suggestion of some slight irregularity in their mode of saying their daily prayers or some doubtful observance of strict Mohammedan practice in eating or drinking, without a single question asked or a chance of explanation.

"Better far ten thousand faithful Moslems should die outright before their time and enter at once into the joys of Paradise," said my Arabic teacher and guide, Dmar-ben-Marabet, the Moor of Algiers, "than that one dog of an unbeliever should ever set foot, by inadvertence, within the holy walls of the capital of Islam!"

Nevertheless, in spite of warnings and mutterings of danger, oft-repeated by my French friends, I made up my mind to go to Keronan and risk everything. My three years in Algiers, in the service of the old Bureau Arabe, had given me a good knowledge of the debased colloquial Arabic universally current among the North African populations, as well as a fair idea of the customs of the country through which I was to travel. I knew my Koran half by heart; I understood the ritual of Islam perfectly; I could turn to Mecca at prayer time with commendable regularity; and I flattered myself that in burnous and turban I would pass any day, with my dark hair and olive-brown Cornish skin, for a very tolerable Tunisian Arab. So I joined myself incontinently to a caravan which was going up country from Susa to Keronan, with something of that careless glee that an Englishman always feels in exposing his life to a little more than ordinary danger.

Our caravan, as it chanced, was a large and important one, for it included, among other things, the annual gifts which the Shereef of Mecca and the Sheikh-ul-Islam at Constantinople always sent as fraternal greeting on the feast of Bahram to the Governor or Keronan. Most honored among these presents, in accordance with common Mohammedan custom, was said to be a beautiful Arabian slave girl, a maiden of the fairest, destined for the harem of the Chief of the Faithful in the City of My Lord the Companion of the Prophet. Of course, we pilgrims of the common herd could none of us see the face of this beautiful girl, selected by the Shereef from all Arabia for so high and dangerous a post of honor; for she was muffled up to the eyes in veils and yashmaks with more than the usual Mohammedan jealousy. But as we gathered in the yard of the big and dirty caravanserai at Susa to mount our camels for the long, slow journey, I saw with interest a graceful figure, draped in the full trousers and flowing robes of the women of Islam, descend the steps with measured tread, and slowly and reluctantly take a seat upon the foremost dromedary. Her eyes alone looked out, as I thought with appealing sadness, upon the busy scene.

"Poor girl!" I said to myself with a touch of compassion; "she's wondering what sort of life she'll have to lead in the harem of that horrid old Arab at Keronan. I'm sorry for her. Her eyes are good. Well, well, it's a comfort, anyhow, to think that to an Arabian girl, accustomed only to the hard, coarse life of the desert, Keronan itself will seem, by comparison, almost like an earthly Paradise."

I had no time, however, to pursue my reflections on the unknown slave girl's probable fate, for as I looked the white-robed Sheikh of the caravan, an evil-eyed old Arab, with a long gray beard, observing me closely from under his bushy eyebrows, gave me a dig in the ribs with his stout stick, and cried to me angrily:

"Now, son of a dog, will you turn aside your face from gazing on women, and make haste there to get upon your own camel?"

Thus practically adjured, I mounted at once, and waited patiently, through the infinite bustle, noise and gesticulation of an Oriental crowd at a moment of general hurry, for the signal for departure. At last, after infinite delays and thwackings and objurgations, and many appealing cries to the Prophet and the holy marabets to look down upon us favorably, we got under way in long line, and proceeded on our road across the dreary, desolate and uninteresting desert. A more hideous journey you can scarcely imagine; indeed, when the Companion of the Prophet first crossed that ghastly expanse to found Keronan he saw it inhabited, says tradition, only by wild beasts and noxious reptiles, so that he was obliged to make solemn proclamation to them, with beat of drums, in the name of Allah: "Serpents and savage creatures retire! for we, the followers of the Messenger of Heaven, mean to establish ourselves in this your desert." And to this day, in spite of the blessed saint and his formal notice, a worse bit of country can nowhere be found on all the dreary outskirts of Sahara.

All day long we journeyed through the waterless plain, and at night we halted by a desert well and prepared to bivouac under the stars of heaven. Our first task was to set up a tent for the chief of the caravan, with a pavilion alongside for the Arabian slave girl whom he was solemnly escorting to the home of her new master. A few of us were told off by the Sheikh to do this honorable piece of work, among whom I happened to be included on the recommendation of the owner of the camels.

"Here you," he cried to me with a rap of his stick, "what do you call yourself, stranger from Algeria?"

"Abdullah-ben-Abderrhaman, a M'zabite of Algiers," I answered glibly, as I fell into the order he pointed with his finger.

"Oh, a M'zabite!" the man replied with a dark scowl. "Well, look out, abdullah, that you take great care of the slave of the Governor. Keep your eyes shut to what you needn't know, and don't go prying into high matters that don't concern you."

As he spoke—was it fancy?—I somehow imagined that the slave girl, now seated on the ground on a bundle of rugs, glanced over at me once more with a strange and frightened yet inquiring look, half curiosity, half appealing terror.

One can judge so little from the eyes alone. They need the aid of the other features to eke out their meaning. With a veiled woman you can guess nothing. Perhaps I was mistaken. After all she was only an Arabian slave girl.

We pitched the tent, and then prepared our own quarters on the dreary desert. In a few minutes more the baskets of dates and of Arab bread were brought out and opened by the noisy crowd; the camels were watered from the well by the wayside; the buzz of voices resounded through the camp; and, forgetting all else but the business of the moment, I turned in silence to eat my own frugal supper of cheese and konskons.

As the night went on, they called me once more—suspiciously, I fancied—into the chief's tent. The Sheikh himself, lolling back upon his square of Tlemcen carpet on the bare ground, interrogated me at some length upon my name and origin. "A M'zabite," he said, with a curious look. "Oho, a M'zabite! Abdullah-ben-Abderrhaman, you are light for that. The Beni M'zab are mostly much darker than you. Son of the children of the broad oasis, let me see your arm! I don't like the look of a M'zabite as light and as fairhaired as the dogs of infidels. Especially on the road to Keronan."

"I lifted my robe and showed him my arm. It was brown, like my face, for I am a dark Cornishman. He nodded and let me go. "It is well!" he muttered. "The man is indeed one of the children of M'zab. Stay here in my tent, though, I may want you to-night. These are days when it befits all true Moslems to guard themselves carefully from the wiles of the infidel."

I retired to the corner and lay down, somewhat nervously, where he pointed me out a place on the coarse blankets. My heart began to flutter a little with the excitement of danger. What small observance could I have overlooked, I wondered, that had roused the suspicion of the caravan and its leader against me? Had I failed in prayer, in washing, or in gesture? Did they guess already I was not really a follower of the Prophet?

As I lay and looked, I saw with perfect certainty this time that the eyes of the slave girl were still riveted in earnest entreaty upon me. She followed my movements with deep attention; nay, more, I even fancied once that she tried to speak to me with her parted lips alone through the folds of her yaskmak. But if so, I failed to make out the words. And all Arab women are such born intriguers!

Some minutes later the gong at the door of the tent sounded. It was the signal for prayer. I rose at once, and knocking my head thrice against the ground in the direction of Mecca, prostrated myself in the fashion prescribed by Mohammedan ritual for the customary litany of the third hour.

I don't know whether it was nervousness or accident, or fate, but in the flurry of the moment, in spite of all my careful rehearsal, I made one fatal mistake of detail, which the chief of the caravan would surely have noticed had he not been too absorbed at the moment it occurred in his own devotions. I glanced around me anxiously to see if I was detected. No, not by the Sheikh; he, I felt sure, had failed to perceive it. But sharper eyes than his were fixed close upon me still. A sudden start, and a glance that seemed not so much like horror as surprise, showed me at once beyond the shadow of doubt that the slave girl had noted in a second my fatal omission.

Would she cry out aloud to her leader and keeper: "This man is not a Mussulman at all," and destroy me? I turned and trembled. It was an anxious moment. But the slave girl never moved one muscle visibly. I know not how, I vaguely felt through veil and yaskmak that some strange passion was sweeping through her soul at that terrible moment. I dropped my eyes and mechanically continued my gabbling prayer. When I looked up again she had drawn the veil inscrutably over her head once more, and sat mute as a statue in the corner opposite.

"Stop there and watch!" the Sheikh murmured sullenly, looking over at me again, as he finished his prayer; and he sat down himself in solemn silence on his dirty rug with the impassive face of the true Arab traveler.

In a few minutes more two veiled old women led away the muffled slave girl to her quarters for the night in the separate tent. In spite of my doubts I composed myself for the evening. I dozed where I sat, or rather crouched on the ground, half wondering whether I should ever reach Keronan in safety. It was a quaint adventure, and I rather enjoyed its bold uncertainty. The chief was snoring regularly now; at times I woke to hear the sound of his heavy breath as he turned uneasily his long form on the floor beside me. I wrapped my burnous round my body as well as I was able, and tried to sleep, in spite of my fear, and the obvious discomfort of my present position.

About 2 in the morning something stirred. I awoke with a start, conscious of a touch on my left shoulder. Happily, I had the presence of mind to keep quite still. I turned to look. A delicate hand, fair and well proportioned, stretched under the edge of the tent canvas, and held out towards me—to my intense surprise—a scrap of written paper. I read on it in ill-formed Arabic letters the single sentence written in pencil in the pure Meccan dialect: "I have found out that you are no Mussulman."

For a moment my brain whirled round bewildered. What on earth could it mean? The Arabian slave girl, then, had really penetrated my clever disguise and, strange to say, had refrained from denouncing me! Could womanly compassion have overcome the prejudices of her cruel religion? Did she mean to betray me, I wondered in soul, or was she going to keep her own counsel?

These Arab women will do anything on earth for an adventure. Cooped up all their lives in the harem of their own house, they love intrigue as the one variation in their monotonous existence. For it they will face even the sack and the river.

I lifted stealthily the hanging corner of the tent and gazed into the inner apartment for the women, from which we were separated by the thin wall of canvas only. If hands wave to you out of mysterious tents, no man of spirit can fail to follow them. The two old Arab women lay fast asleep on their prayer rugs upon the sandy ground; but the slave girl sat up, awake and unveiled, for my eyes to gaze upon. She was beautiful, indeed, but with a look of utter terror and wild despair on her sweet young face and a strange appeal in her big black eyes turned imploringly towards me as a last resource, I fancied, from a life of misery.

She wished me to save her from her threatened fate, I supposed. And, indeed, mad as the attempt appears to me now I think it over in cold blood, I would have given a great deal that moment to effect her escape. But the thing was impossible, clearly impossible. I gazed at her blankly in mute astonishment. I knew I was holding my life by a thread, but she was very beautiful. If any of them awoke—the Sheikh or the women—they would kill me where I lay as soon as look at me.

Would she risk so great a peril for mere intrigue?

The girl raised the pencil once more and wrote, in Arabic again: "If you are not a Mussulman, for heaven's sake tell me so. I will not betray you. I will keep your confidence."

I didn't hesitate for a moment to take the pencil and paper from her and write in return: "I am no Mussulman. I am a Christian—an Englishman. Treat me as a friend. What can I do for you?"

The girl reeled, almost as if she would have fainted, when she read my answer, and I saw that her hands could hardly hold the pencil aright as she rapidly wrote a few lines in reply. She held the paper up to me in dead silence with a very white face. I looked at the words in unspeakable astonishment. * * * A sudden mist seemed to dim my eyes. * * * It was strange! It was incredible. * * * She had written in English!

For a second or two, that fact alone was all I could take in. Then by slow degrees the meaning of her message dawned dimly across my bewildered mind. I read the words, and knew the whole strange truth. "I am an English girl. I have come from India. They are taking me to Keronan as a present to the Governor. If you are really an Englishman, for honor's sake, help me! If you can do nothing else for me, at least be merciful, and kill me this night here."

Heaven gave me strength to repress the cry of surprise and horror that rose spontaneously to my lips as I read. I seized the pencil and wrote rapidly in reply, in English, of course: "I will help you, if I die for it. Thank heaven, I was moved to come in the same caravan with you. No more now. It's too dangerous. I will go back to my own part of the tent for the present. As soon as I can think of any means of escape, I will lift the curtain and communicate again with you."

The tears were rolling fast down the poor girl's cheeks, and she clasped her white hands in speechless agony; but she uttered no sound; neither of us dared to interchange a spoken word one with the other. I dropped the corner of the tent stealthily, and turned to revolve the matter at my leisure in my own quarters.

As I turned a terrible and disconcerting sight met my glance. The Sheikh was sitting up on his prayer mat, facing me with wide-open eyes and an expression of the fiercest and most resolute hatred on all his savage Arab features. I saw at once that all was discovered. His body was bent slightly forward in the attitude of one who watches intently, and he held his right hand upon the scimitar-shaped knife at his side, half drawn already from its curved wooden scabbard. We were lost, lost, lost beyond hope or chance of recovery! The rustling of the curtain must have woke him as he lay, and he had no doubt watched with those horrid eyes of his all our short and speechless colloquy. Strange to say, however, in spite of this pressing danger that now stared me in the face, one feeling lay uppermost in my mind, and that feeling was, not of terror, but of pure curiosity. Come what might, he should not kill me till I had solved the mystery of this English slave girl sent as a present from the Shereef of Mecca to his brother in Islam, the Governor of Keronan.

For one flash of the eye we faced one another and glared at each other's faces in silence. I knew it was war, war to the knife. And the knife alone must now settle it. At a single word, at the sound of a pistol, at one cry from the Sheikh or the women in the tent, the whole encampment would be alive with angry, fanatical Arabs. My throat would be cut as remorselessly as a butcher cuts a sheep's, and my mysterious companion might share the same fate, if she was not even reserved for a worse and more cruel one at Keronan. A single infidel's life would be as dust in the balance to that fierce and savage band of armed zealots. It was now or never. No time to reflect, to plan, to decide. My whirling brain never stopped to deliberate. I must act at once or die unsatisfied.

Without one second's hesitation I drew my short Kabyle knife from my sheath in my girdle and sprang noiselessly like a beast of prey upon that glowering old Arab.

If he gave but one shriek it was all up with me. I knew it instinctively, and leaped upon him in silence with all my weight. I leaped at his neck. One hand clutched hard the old wretch's throat, with the other I dug my knife deep and remorselessly into his left bosom. It was our one chance—my own and the slave girl's. The Sheikh was a strong and wiry old man. He had lots of life in him. He struggled hard against my unexpected onslaught; but, happily, youth and agility were on my side. By some miracle of luck I managed to throttle him tight and hard with my maddened grasp before he had time fully to draw his long, curved knife from its Persian scabbard. My own was straight; on that infinitesimal difference in the two weapons my life and the English woman's depended that moment. I drove it home to the hilt in his heart. He fell heavily, with a loud cry gurgling unheard in his rattling throat. I felt it was loud, for I saw it convulse him, but my hand never for one indivisible instant of time relaxed its wild pressure on his gasping windpipe. No sound came forth. I choked that desperate shriek unborn in his lungs. Murder as it was, the whole thing passed off as noiselessly and quietly as the lifting of the woman's curtain had oone ten minutes earlier.

What an eternity it seemed, those next ten minutes, while I sat and watched and formed my plans hastily, with the warm corpse still bleeding in red pools on the floor and no sound but the regular breath of the Arab women in the next compartment to break the monotonous silence of that awful death chamber.

At last I collected my scattered thoughts and determined to make one wild dash still possible for freedom. To speak to the slave girl (as I still called her to myself) was clearly out of the question. I must have awoke the Arab women, and the whole camp would then have hacked me to pieces. I dipped my finger cautiously into the pool of blood and wrote in big print letters on the white robe—for I had now neither pencil nor paper at hand—"I have killed the Sheikh. Come outside the tent. We two will run for it."

I lifted the curtain and showed that message of blood to the white and trembling girl. Her face never blanched with fear for a moment. She merely bowed her head silently once more, and creeping away without further sign met me outside the tent on the bare sand next minute.

I took her hand in mine and led her along. She held it tight, as a child might have held it. Even at that supreme moment of doubt and anxiety the pressure thrilled me through to the very heart. We glided stealthily on in the dark, hand in hand, together, noiseless as ghosts, in our white robes, all stained with blood, and passed away towards where the camels were tethered. It was a second of terrible and breathless suspense. If a camel stirred, if an Arab awoke, if a dog barked, our fate was sealed; we would die unknown and our friends in England would never even hear of it. And I should never have solved that strange mystery. I could feel my companion's heart beat fast by the mere touch of her hand, I could hear her breath come and go painfully. I drew my knife a second time, still wet with blood, and cut the halter of the swiftest and strongest camel. We seated ourselves in silence on the saddle. The beast rose at once, and with the instinct of his race began to move slowly away, obedient to my touch, from the slumbering camp. How I thanked heaven that night for his soft footfall, the soft footfall of those padded soles on the loose and level sands of the desert. A horse's hoof ringing on the plain would at once have aroused all those vigilant Arabs. The camel, with his long, quick, shambling gait and fleshy sole, seemed to glide as stealthily as we ourselves had done in the sleeping camp away towards the open over the darkling sand waste.

For many minutes we spoke no word. I hardly allowed myself even to breathe. I took no care to guide our beast in any particular set direction; I only wished to put as great a space as possible forthwith between our two selves and that caravan full of bloodthirsty Moslems. But at last, as we began to breathe freely once more and to realize that the first pressing danger was fairly behind us, I looked up towards the stars for guidance toward Tunis. Once safe in the capital the English consul would secure our escape. The great point was to reach the shore before the death of the Sheikh was noised abroad. I knew the town lay roughly to nor'-nor'west. With a gleam of joy I discovered the Great Bear in that cloudless sky, and turning my camel's head towards the sea and England we went on once more in solemn silence.

We had gone, I suppose, an hour or more in the dark across that sea of sand, guided only by our heavenly compass, before I ventured even to address my trembling companion. By that time, however, curiosity at last overcame me. But I dared not speak aloud even then, so deep was my sense of awe and mystery at our solitude and our danger. I whispered low:

"What is your name, and how did you come to be taken to Mecca?"

The answer came back in a soft, sweet voice that seemed at once to go through my heart.

"My name's Ethel Maitland. I come from Peshawur. My people were all killed in the mutiny. They carried me off overland to Mecca, and you are the very first European I've seen or spoken to since I left India."

The very simplicity and calmness of manner with which she told me that terrible story in so few words smote my heart to the quick far more truly and deeply than any display of emotion or eloquence could possibly have smitten it. I felt how much she must have suffered and passed through before she reached that sublime height of stoical composure. I couldn't answer her back. I was too profoundly stirred for words to come to me. I merely touched her hand with mine a second time, and urged our camel forward again with redoubled energy.

It was known in England that three English ladies, survivors of the massacre, had been sent to Mecca. My companion was one of them. Horrible to tell, another languishes there to this very day in unspeakable captivity.

The gray dawn was breaking over the northern mountains when we reached the little village of Bent Saida, at the edge of the desert, where the main coast of the Atlas commences. Fortunately I had with me a sufficiency of money, the sum I had laid aside for my stay at Keronan. We rode into the village and stopped boldly before the little Arab inn. I held up my bloodstained burnous openly. It would serve me there as a positive ally.

"In the name of the Prophet," I shouted aloud, "horses, horses! El Islam is at stake. There is fighting going on with infidels at Susa. We are riding to Tunis on important business with the Bey from the Governor of Keronan. The bride of the Shereef is here beside me. The caravan is stopped, and the Holy City itself is threatened."

The effect was magical. I had enlisted every man in the village at once in my service. "A Jehad! A Jehad!" they cried. "Death to the infidels!"

In ten minutes we were fairly horsed, and had left our camel to the care of the innkeeper.

How we got through the remainder of that ride I hardly know to this day even. We rode for our lives, among the mountain passes, exchanging horses day and night, willingly served by the villagers everywhere, and never stopping till we drew rein at last opposite the British consulate in the Souk-el-Islam in our wild desire to outstrip rumor. We had been near-by forty-eight hours on the road, and we dropped from our seats more dead than alive. But we had distanced the very report of the Sheikh's death, and we were safe at last on what was practically as good as British territory.

That very evening, on a gunboat in the harbor, a stately girl in Arab dress, but unveiled and uncovered, received from all the officers and men the respect and homage due an English lady. And by the time they had landed us safely at Marseilles Ethel Maitland and I had made up our minds that we would go henceforth on all our journeys in life together.

And that is why I never got to Keronan at all till I drove across there in an open carriage, some six weeks since, along the broad high road the French engineers have cut through the midst of the desert from Susa.

She—How much is "Bred in Old Kentucky"?
Music Dealer—Five cents a loaf, I suppose.

OUT OF THE ORDINARY.

About 4,475,000 persons are employed in the world's mines.

It is estimated that 767,636,200 tons of coal were mined the word over in 1900.

If cyclists wish their lamps to burn steadily and brightly, let them put a piece of camphor in the oil vessel.

Experts predict that 1,500,000 visitors may be expected to appear in the streets of London during coronation week.

In British Columbia there are more Buddhists than Baptists, more Confucians than Congregationalists, and nearly as many pagans as Lutherans.

Mme. Pompadour, whose headdress has given a name to a well-known style of wearing the hair, spent 100,000 francs a year on perfumes and pomades.

It is reported that the Macedonian outlaw, Sarafof, recently deposited £20,000 at a bank at Odessa. It is supposed that the money was derived from Miss Stone's ransom.

The alligator never leaves fresh water, while the crocodile often goes to sea, and in the West Indies has sometimes been found many miles from land, heading directly for an island, possibly out of sight.

The cereals (wheat, corn, oats, rye and barley) raised in the United States during the past five years represent a value to the farmer of $6,250,000,000, or an increase of nearly $1,000,000,000 over the preceding five years.

An old book, in which was recorded the acts of John Walker, a chemist of Durham, England, furnishes evidence that he was the first inventor of the lucifer match. In 1827 he sold the first box, the price being 18 pence.

Australia has, proportionately, more churches than any other country, the number being 6,013, or 210 churches to every 100,000 people. England has 144 churches to every 100,000; Russia only 55 to the same number.

The medical laws of Australia, passed in 1901, admit to practice physicians who have taken a five-year course in medicine before taking a degree. This debars from practice there all graduates of American medical schools.

Henry Leitner, aged ninety, who lives on the State border between Fairfield and Richland, N. C., has a bale of cotton ginned before the rebellion. He has refused rich offers for it, as he prefers to keep it as a memento of old days.

Ashington, in the center of the Northumberland (England) colliery district, has accommodation in its clubs for one-sixth of its inhabitants. It also boasts the largest public house bar, which will accommodate 3,000 thirsty miners at a time.

"No darkened house, no durable coffin, no special mourning attire, no bricked grave, no unnecessary show, no avoidable expenses and no unusual eating and drinking." Such are a few of the advantages offered to members of the British Funeral Reformers' Association.

The sheriff at Bridgeton, N. J., the other day sold the whole village of Halberton for $1,000. It was started in 1893 as a colony for Russian Hebrews from New York, but proved a failure. The property consisted of nearly 5,000 acres of land, 200 houses and a large factory building.

According to the completed census report, there are 1,019,546 families in London, the average family numbering slightly over 4.4 persons. These families share the services of 234,398 female and 15,425 male servants. In the general population females exceed males by 252,371. The number of pauper inmates in workhouses is 46,646.

To shake about 200,000 peach trees and 50,000 plum trees for the purpose of dislodging injurious insects is a formidable task, yet it was successfully accomplished several times between April 18 and June 1, 1901, by the Hale Georgia Orchard Company at Fort Valley, in Georgia. The insect against which this action was taken was the curculio beetle.

In the northern part of San Jose county, California, and lapping over into San Mateo county, lies the so-called Big Basin, a bit of the primitive forest. The exact area of the tract is about 2,500 acres. It contains one of the finest stretches of woodland which remains in the State. The characteristic tree is the giant redwood. It has been proposed to convert the basin into a forest preserve.

It is claimed that although women are now successful in preserving their youth almost to the point of annihilating old age, it is also true that women's hair turns gray sooner than it used to. It is said there are no old ladies in these days. Grandmothers refuse to put on caps and sit at home with their knitting. On the other hand, their granddaughters begin to have gray hair before they get out of college.

Before the English occupation of India it was estimated that the Ganges carried to the sea every year 1,000,000 dead bodies. It was then considered by the Hindoos that the happiest death was one found in its waves, and all pious Hindoos who could do so were carried to its banks and placed in its waters to die. The decaying carcasses along its banks were probably responsible in no small degree for the pestilences which formerly desolated the peninsula.

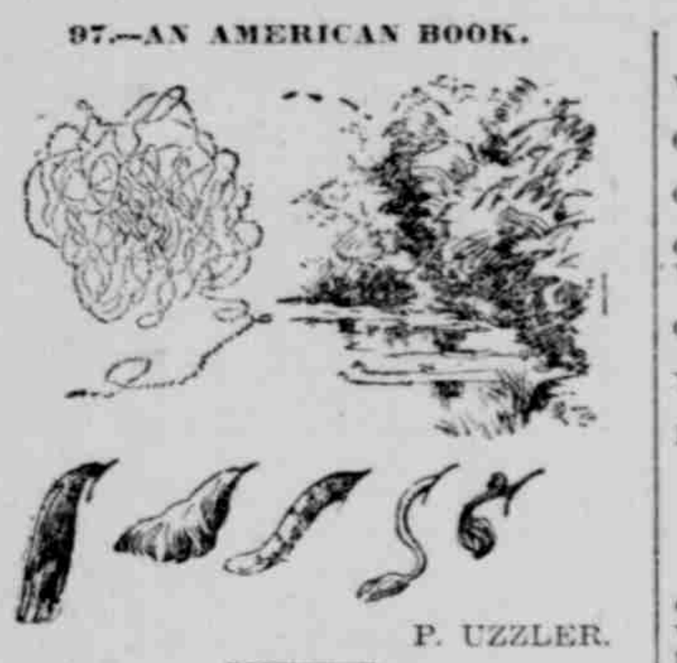
As a sequel to the recent earthquakes in Sardinia an enormous chasm has been opened in the earth, while the surface has been bulged into a hill of considerable elevation, from which stones and masses of earth are projected. There are also symptoms that the interior of the hill is in an ebullient condition. Scientists incline to the belief that the phenomena observed are volcanic. Another consequence of the earthquake is that the Lake Santo, near Modema, which was about 500 yards long and 100 wide, has completely disappeared.

SPHINX LORE

Enigmatic Knots of Odd and Ingenious Kind for the Leisure Hour.

[Any communication intended for this department should be addressed to E. R. Chadbourn, Lewiston, Maine.]

97.—AN AMERICAN BOOK.



P. UZZLER.

98.—TRANSPOSITION.

Two daffy-down-dillies came into my room,
I thought that spring had come,
With its buds and leaves and bright-hued bloom
And the birdie's cheerful hum.
I forgot the snow and the FINAL chills
Of those northern breezes cold,
In the smile that beamed from the daffodils—
I wish you could see them unfold.
Large and double as never before.
They seem in their new spring dress.
And the longer I look I love them more;
Oh! the springtime is bright, I confess,
But nothing so cheery as the yellow fair
Of her daffy-down-dillies, my love PRIMEs there.
FRANTZ.

99.—HOMONYMS.

Supply the blanks in the following sentences with words having the same sound but spelt differently and with different meanings:

1. What a pretty little *** lamb that is in the field by the *** tree. Don't *** see it? 2. That boy that performed the wonderful **** of jumping over a bar six **** high. 3. If I **** you doing such a piece of mischief again I shall take you before a magistrate and you will be heavily ****. 4. She thought to create a sensation by making a ***** to *****. 5. That greedy boy *** the ***** tarts at one meal. 6. That poor child is a ****** of water-cress and she lives in a miserable underground ******. 7. Well, to be quit ****** I don't care for ******* fruits. 8. It is ***** to make that poor girl sit at that difficult ****** work all this fine morning. 9. If I could only **** enough money I would buy a silver coffee ***. 10. What is the ****** of that piece of meat? If you will **** a minute I will tell you. 11. I think that child is recovering from her illness, she is certainly not so **** as she was last ****. 12. There is a *** fallen into the water. If he can only reach that **** he will be safe. AN.

100.—CHARADE.

Our President strove with his hearty clasp
To press a dent in her hand;
The Vice came next with TWO vise-like grasp
That she needed nerve to stand.

For TWO glimpse of her THREEs, though light was chary,
ONE TWO word from her lips that fell,
Did the Secretary in secret tarry
And the Treasurer treasure her well.

She made us weep and she made us laugh,
This famous COMPLETE and fair,
And some dozen begged for her autograph,
ONE TWO THREE of her auburn hair.

But she said, as she smiled on all and each,
And turned from the hall to glide;
"Miss Saywell was hoarse, so I read her speech;
So glad you were satisfied!" M. C. S.

101.—ANAGRAM.

The THIN DISGUISING of their thoughts, feelings or purposes is the WHOLE characteristic of some people. They seem to think that it is a very amusing way to treat a friend so that he may be thoroughly mystified in regard to what they have done or intend to do, even, at times, going so far as to lead him to believe that they mean to do the exact opposite of what he desires them to do, and the exact opposite of what they really intend to do, and then laugh very heartily when they are finally found out. It is a question in my mind whether such THIN DISGUISING of their intentions is a good WHOLE characteristic or not. At least there is a possibility of it leading to unpleasant, if not disastrous consequences. T. H.

102.—LINKADE.

Well the spell of romance may the grandeur enhance
Of the reign of the FIRST, famed in legend and story;
Oft he climbed to the crest of the SECOND in quest
Of treasures to add to the sum of his glory.
While the THIRD of the flowers in the tropical bowers
Gave pleasure and cheer through the summer's long hours;
Yet one "plant" was missing, I venture to say,
For gas and ALL lights are the things of to-day. TRANZA.

103.—A SHOPPING PROBLEM.

Here is a little tangle I picked up the other day in a street car. Two shoppers were discussing their afternoon's work in the department stores. Said one lady: "I only made one purchase to-day—some lovely dollar ribbon. The price had been marked down so that I might have bought as many yards for $98.01 as I would have paid dollars for 100 yards. I bought a quarter yard of it; the loveliest tint; if I had it with me I would show you, but I ordered it sent home in the delivery wagon."

What must have been the special bargain price of the ribbon? F. L. S.

104.—INITIAL CHANGE.

ONE young Doctor Fledgeling was hanging his sign,
A neighbor, inquisitive, came up.
"How's business?" "Oh," laughed Esculapius, "fine;
Already I'm getting my name up."

TWO he got out of patience, as any one may,
With no coin in his pocket to jingle.
What he got out of patients for many a day
Served scarcely to pay for his shingle.
JUSTIN JEST.

MARCH SOLVING.

Prize Winners—1. Mrs. P. H. Chapin, Munhall, Pa. 2. (For 51) Miss Lucy Randall, 711 East Washington street, Muncie, Ind.

Other excellent solutions are acknowledged from E. A. Miles, P. Q. Farr, Francis H. Durbin, G. D. Oakes, L. E. Hanna, Fred H. Rose, Nellie Peters, Louise S. Webb, Harriet Staples, Cora Burns, S. K. Adams, Mrs. Julia Loer, Ralph J. Strong, Ida Steele, M. H. D., Mrs. Ida H. Long, J. A. Mower, D. F. Rossiter, Franklin Ames, Mrs. Martha F. McCord, Fred Waite, Miss B. M. Hill, Nettie Noble, Mrs. Albert Wisehart, Miriam Frye, Mrs. D. E. Budenz, C. A. Mason, Mrs. Horace Brown, Kate Briggs, H. C. Wright, J. E. Shaw, Augusta Burger, D. M. White, Andrew Foster, Frances H. Durbin, R. E. D., Mrs. F. G. Hackleman, L. R. White, Lillian Young, E. S. Elann, Luella B. Thornton, Susan D. Carter, Mrs. Clara Smith, G. A. Rogers.

ANSWERS.

81—1. Round-robin. 2. Circle-t. 3. Ring-boot. 4. O-gee.

82—Probing, robin, obin, B.

83—

36	43	28	53	38	15	32	55
27	52	37	42	33	54	39	16
44	35	50	29	14	41	56	31
51	26	45	34	57	30	17	40
8	49	62	25	66	13	58	19
63	24	9	46	61	18	67	12
48	7	22	65	10	69	20	59
23	64	47	6	21	61	11	68

6 to 14, partridge; 15 to 25, mockingbird; 26 to 31, cuckoo; 32 to 35, lark; 36 to 40, robin; 41 to 46, hoopoe; 47 to 57, nightingale; 58 to 63, oriole; 64 to 69, magpie. The sum of each horizontal and vertical line of the square is 300; half the sum of each diagonal line is 300.

84—Machines.

85—Mary, Andrew, Elim, Abel, Seir, Asher, Nebo, Dan, Leah, Troas, Levi, Silas, Ruth, Edom.

86—Alter-native.

87—1. Daily increase, 5. 2. Total, 366.

88—Bandit.

Useless Cause of Offense.

Milwaukee Free Press.

The Chinese population of the United States proper dwindled from 109,776 in 1890 to 93,283. Undoubtedly there were many immigrants, in spite of the law, to take the place of the many who returned to their homes. If the existing barrier was effective enough to cause a net loss of 16,493 Chinese, there was hardly any need of putting in jeopardy our friendly relations with an empire in which we have so much at stake.

The Thrush.

The creamy dogwood branches,
The rosy redbud trees,
The drifts of sweet wild-plum bloom
O'erhung by honey bees,
The gleaming buckeye blossoms
The south wind blew apart,
Oh, all the woods awaking,
They overfilled my heart!

Then clear, from out a thicket,
There rang that golden note
That flutes from none but only
The tawny thrush's throat;
So charged with all sweet secrets
The April has to tell,
I bowed my head and hearkened,
Enchanted by its spell.

Till presently that magic
Heart-melting melody
Drew all my soul to meet it
In sudden ecstasy.
My spirit found its pinions
In blessed bird-like birth,
And knew the joyous passion
That thrilled through all the earth.

The while the thrush was singing,
I heard the violets stir,
And through the dreamy woodlands
The breaking buds confer;
I half divined the glories
Of all the springs to be,
—When, O the song was silent!
The thrush had flown, ah me!

—Evaleen Stein.

AT THE CLUB.
Smith—What kind of cigars do you call these?
Jones—"The Undertaker's Hope," I think.

MAN-EATING SHARKS.

Authenticated Tales About Them from the Nantucket Fisheries.

Letter in Springfield Republican.

I was sure that if there were such things as man-eating sharks, Nantucket sailors could prove it from their own knowledge. Few remain now of those mariners who knew every sea on our globe, but Judge T. C. Defriez, of the town, has obligingly taken pains to call on those left who had been eyewitnesses of fatal encounters with these monsters, and has sent me the notes which he took down from their lips. They are necessarily grewsome tales, but their evidence is positive and you can publish them if you wish.

Oct. 4, 1849, the whaleship Phoenix, of Nantucket, was at anchor in the harbor of Tumbez, coast of Peru, South America. Two of the crew went in swimming; soon a shark was discovered coming in and warning was immediately given to the swimmers, who put for the ship. Ropes were put over the side and one of the men was safely taken on board; the other, George Martin, succeeded in getting hold of a rope, but before he could be hauled on board the shark seized him by the thigh; the man held on to the rope and the shark tore the flesh from the thigh to the foot, but the man was taken on board and lived a short time.

Soon after the man was bitten the crew of the whaleship Spartan, at anchor near-by, caught the shark and took from his body the flesh recently bitten from Martin's thigh; it was sent on board the Phoenix and buried on shore with the remains of Martin.

Obed Sandsbury, now living at Nantucket, eighty-five years of age, was at the time of the foregoing incident second officer of the Phoenix; he well remembers the circumstances of the case, and also has the journal of the voyage, kept by himself, in which it is recorded. He cleaned and preserved the jaw of the shark; it had sixteen rows of teeth on the upper side and fourteen on the lower. He says it was a "ground shark."

The following vessels were at anchor at the Island of Vavavo, one of the Friendly islands, on or about July 5, 1857; whaleships Edward Cary and Harvest, of Nantucket, and Shepherdess, of Mystic, Conn.; they were there to get recruits and to give the crew liberty on shore.

The crew on the Shepherdess returned to their ship intoxicated and quarrelsome, so much so that the officer in charge called upon Captain Riddell, of the ship Harvest, for assistance, who sent a boat's crew with the first officer to help restore order. Most of the men were put in irons, but one said if he were allowed to sleep a few hours he should be all right, and the request was granted. Soon after going below he appeared on deck and jumped overboard, and a boat which was alongside the ship was immediately sent to rescue the man. About the time the crew got hold of him he was seized by a shark; they succeeded in getting him into the boat, but he was so mutilated that he died before they got back to the ship.

Obed Sandsbury, before mentioned as second officer of the ship Phoenix, was second officer of the Edward Cary at the time the foregoing incident occurred and well remembers it.

Capt. Charles Grant, of Nantucket, an old whaling captain, corroborates the statement and also says that about the year 1846 Captain Spooner, of the whaleship Era, of Newport, R. I., told him that his wife, a native of the Friendly islands, in the South Pacific, while in swimming, had a leg bitten off by a shark; she was rescued, but lived only a short time.

In addition to the testimony obtained by Judge Defriez, I have the following from Mrs. Lydia Selden, of Nantucket: In 1880 she was on board of a steamer bound for New York from California. Off Acapulco, Mex., a large shark pursued the ship and came so near that they captured and killed him, and inside of him they found a man's arm, a terrible sight, which all hands were called to see. A long, detailed account was published in the New Bedford Mercury in March, 1880, but I have not seen it.